

An Old Migration Record and Notes on
Hibernation of *Macroglossa stellatarum* Linn.
(Lepidoptera: Sphingidae)

By TORBEN LARSEN*

In 1761 a scientific expedition, sponsored by the Danish king, left for Arabia Felix under the leadership of Peter Forsskaal, a Swedish botanist and disciple of Linné. The expedition ended a disaster, with the death of all but one of the members, the famous Carsten Niebuhr, but Forsskaal's diaries survived and were belatedly published by the Swedish Linnéan Society nearly 200 years later (Forsskaal, P. (1950): *Resa til Lyckliga Arabien*, Uppsala). The diaries give what must be the first written evidence of the migratory habits of *Macroglossa stellatarum*. Between the Straits of Gibraltar and Marseille, about the first of May, he writes: "Several *Sphinx stell. (atarum* ed.) flew over the ship; unknown whether they came from land or were brought along as chrysalids which hatched due to the heat." The latter hypothesis is untenable and they were undoubtedly migrating from Algeria towards the north.

I am not aware how much additional knowledge has been accumulated since Williams (*Migration of Butterflies*, 1930) assumed that *stellatarum* was continuously brooded in the Mediterranean area and did not hibernate, but it may be of interest to note the pattern in Lebanon. During my four years in that country, I gained the distinct impression that it spends the time from October/November till February/March hibernating in caves and crevices, though a few specimens may be seen on the wing in the winter months. Often specimens may be found dead on the windows of disused houses in spring, much in the manner of *Aglais urticae* Linné and *Inachis io* Linné in Europe. However, my most interesting observation was near the coast at Batroun in February 1974 when I needed some goatskins to match some we had bought the previous year. The right colour was not available in the displayed stock, so I went to browse in a cool, semi-dark storeroom which had been untouched for months. Between the layers of stored skins were scores of hibernating *stellatarum*, immobilised but fully alert. On being disturbed they started their usual warming-up process of wing quivering and were capable of flying within a few minutes. There were probably hundreds concealed in the piles of skins and, though possibly induced by exceptionally good hibernation conditions, it was difficult to avoid the impression that the assemblage was gregarious in a more active sense.

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AN EARLY YELLOW SHELL (*CAMPTOGRAMMA BILINEATA* L.).
— This moth is rarely seen in May, but this year one occurred in my garden at West Wickham, on the 29th.— J. M. CHALMERS-HUNT.